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Store: a Play in
One Act: by Elizabeth
Kellam

In the Vassar Series of Plays
Edited by Gertrude Buck

Samuel French: Publisher
28-30 West Thirty-eighth St. : New York

LONDON

Samuel French, Ltd.

26 SOUTHAMPTON STREET, STRAND

PRICE THIRTY-FIVE CENTS

MONOGRAPH

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THE VASSAR SERIES OF PLAYS

Every play in this series has been written by a member of the Play-Writing Class at Vassar College. But each play as printed is the product of a group-activity. Not merely an individual seated at a desk, but a community working together in a theater, is responsible for it in its final form.

Some of these plays have been "tried out" by the Vassar Dramatic Workshop and some by the Community Theatre of Poughkeepsie, New York. By the coöperative efforts of all who were associated in these enterprises—actors, committee workers and financial supporters—these plays have been given a sympathetic and intelligent production before audiences also intelligent and sympathetic, whose reaction has afforded the writers much valuable criticism. In the preliminary readings and rehearsals, also, occasional weak points which had escaped the ordeal of class criticism came to light and were strengthened by the author's revision. In fact, the plays as they appear in this series are literally a collaboration of the writers with innumerable friendly critics in the play-writing class, the cast and the audience. And it would be ungracious to put the fruits of this collaboration at the service of the public without grateful acknowledgment to all those who have in any way helped to establish and carry on the Vassar Dramatic Workshop or the Community Theatre of Poughkeepsie.

In recent years there has been an increasing de-

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mand for well-written, dramatically effective one-act plays, suitable for production by semi-professional companies or by amateur organizations of serious purpose and some degree of training. To aid in supplying this demand is the purpose of the Vassar Series of Plays. Other plays written by members of the Play-Writing Class at Vassar College may be secured in typewritten form by application to The Workshop Bureau of Plays, Vassar College.

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THE STORE

PRODUCING THE PLAY

"The Store" has six good character parts. If these are presented as real people, each with his own marked individuality, the play can hardly fail to amuse and delight any audience.

But there are some further interesting possibilities in this play. The family situation which it represents can be so graphically worked out by means of the careful placing of characters on the stage that the audience not only *hears* the successive attacks upon "Pa Dicky" by Grace and George, and finally by Mary, but *sees* these attacks and their complete repulse, one after another, almost as if they were advances and retreats upon a battlefield.

The decisive moment in this struggle is when Mary, fighting for herself and for George, after Grace and "Ma" have deserted her, suddenly realizes, at the height of her exultation in her coming freedom, that when she is gone Ma will have double work to do,—and refuses to buy escape from drudgery at such a price. The picture on the stage at this point—just before Mary exclaims, "We can't, George," should place Mary almost in the center front of the stage. To gain this position, she should move impulsively from the door toward her mother on the words "Ma, oh, Ma!" George has slipped into her former place by the door, his hand on the knob, standing on one foot, with impatience to be gone and looking anxiously at her as the captain of the expedition. Ma sits in her chair by the stove, also looking at Mary, in an attitude of anguished

appeal. Mr. Dicky is planted opposite to Mary, watching her with an expression of triumph. Grace and Harry sit together at the other side of the stove from Ma. Their eyes are also focussed on Mary.

The effect of tension in this scene and of concentration upon Mary as the central figure may be contrasted with the curtain-picture, in which Mr. Dicky occupies the center foreground and dominates the stage, Mary, Ma, Grace and Harry suggesting by their attitudes their complete subjugation. The point that things remain just as they were before the revolt of the family may be cleverly indicated by placing the characters in the curtain-scene precisely as they were placed in the scene just after the entrance of Mr. Dicky.

The underlying tragedy in this family insurrection will lose none of its effect if relieved by the humorous touches for which the play gives abundant opportunity. Harry may be played almost as a broad-farce character; Grace, George and Ma, as well as Pa, have strong comedy values. But Mary should be acted so as to arouse the real sympathy of the audience.

The costumes for this play are extremely simple. They should not, however, be grotesque, or raise a laugh at first sight in the audience. The setting may include all the articles suggested in the stage directions or be much simplified. A stove, an old rocking-chair for Ma, two or three wooden stools not higher than an ordinary chair, and perhaps a wooden bench, two or three barrels and boxes and some shelves constitute all the articles which are absolutely necessary. Instead of actual cans, etc., on the shelves, a strip of paper on which rows of cans, boxes and bottles are painted may be pasted along the shelves. In general, the setting and costumes should not call attention to themselves, but be subordinate to the situation and the characters.

This play should move rapidly through the talk of Ma and George, cues being picked up sharply so as to carry the necessary explanations of Pa's early history without any sense of drag. The scene between the two girls begins very slowly, to emphasize their extreme fatigue. But after Mary breaks the news of the new branch store, the movement becomes more rapid and, with Harry's entrance, is accelerated to marked swiftness. Mr. Dicky's appearance checks the flow of talk, but it runs faster again as soon as he makes his offer to Harry. From this point on the tempo is quick, so that Mary's pauses, when she makes up her mind to stay, have their full significance. After she says, "Oh, that's all right, Pa, that's all right," the business should be as rapid as possible until the exit of George. The few movements made after his exit must be deliberate, and the descent of the curtain slow, so that the effect of the final tableau is not blurred for the audience.

GERTRUDE BUCK.

CHARACTERS

MR. DICKY.

MRS. DICKY.

MARY DICKY

GRACE DICKY } their children.

GEORGE DICKY }

HARRY, Grace's lover.

First produced by the Vassar Dramatic Workshop, May 3, 1919.

THE STORE

SCENE: *The back room of the DICKY grocery store. Shelves beginning at the right-hand corner extend from the floor to the ceiling about halfway across the back of the stage. These are crowded with boxes, cans, jars, suggestive of wholesale stock rather than the retail lines displayed on the shelves of the store proper. There is a large, air-tight stove a little to the left of the center back and next to it a high desk with a green-shaded electric light dropped over it. A high window is above the desk. On the right a door leads into the street, on the left, one into the store proper. Large boxes, barrels, crates, and sacks stand around everywhere. There are a stool and a chair or two around the stove and a ladder for getting up to the shelves.*

TIME: *About nine o'clock of a Saturday night.*

As the curtain rises, MRS. DICKY is seen standing over a group of boxes and baskets, from which packages and bundles of all sorts protrude, very evidently grocery orders waiting for delivery. She is a small, dumpish sort of a person of middle age, with thin, gray hair drawn back from her face, rosy cheeks and a mouth which she constantly purses up. She wears a red crocheted shawl over her shoul-

ders and is busily checking off items on the list she holds.

MRS. DICKY. Six cans of soup, coffee, that's here. Beans. Where are them beans now? (*Pause*) Beans—half a pound of cheese. Sakes! What a sight of canned goods! That's a customer after Pa's own heart. Two loaves of bread. That's right. Starch—

(The street door opens with a rush and a boy of about fifteen bounces in, slamming the door behind him. He is blue-eyed, freckled and snub-nosed, with short, black, shoe-brush hair. He has a knitted cap pulled down over his ears and a mackinaw on.)

GEORGE. Hello, Ma!

MRS. D. (*Not looking up from her work*) You back again?

GEORGE. Yap! All this stuff got to go out! Gosh! What's Pa think a Saturday night's for, anyways?

MRS. D. Seems to me you might know by now, George, that Saturday night's a busy time in this store. Won't take you no time at all to get them things out. Farthest ain't more'n one or two squares away.

GEORGE. What's Pa have to go and have such a late delivery for? A fellow can't never git to the movies.

MRS. D. Your Pa's looking out for customers. He gets more this way.

GEORGE. (*Kicking savagely at a box*) Blame take the old customers, anyway! Always deliverin' and deliverin'! Why, Jim Connihan, he can go to the movies every afternoon and evening, too. Gosh! I hate this store!

MRS. D. How about getting out with them orders? Folks'll be telephoning if you don't get a move on.

GEORGE. Aw, say, can't a feller warm up? (*Going over and standing in front of the stove.*)

MRS. D. (*Anxious in a second, coming up and feeling under his coat*) Where's your scarf? Haven't lost it, have you? You'll catch your death of cold one of these days.

GEORGE. (*Impulsively throwing an arm around his mother's shoulder*) Say, Ma, you don't honestly like it, do you?

MRS. D. Like what?

GEORGE. This working in the store all the time.

MRS. D. (*With a little sigh*) Don't many of us do what we like, George. The work's got to be done and I guess it's up to you and me and the girls to do it.

GEORGE. But Pa could hire folks in to help same as Jim Connihan's father does.

MRS. D. That would cost your Pa a sight of money. The store wouldn't pay half so well as it does now with us what don't have to be paid all helping.

GEORGE. Well, what's the money good for? Don't have no fun with it.

MRS. D. But your Pa's so proud of the store, George. He thinks we love working around here same as he does.

GEORGE. (*Under his breath*) Well, we don't.

MRS. D. And he's got a right to be proud of his store when I think how he started out. Nothing but a shack and him using the front room to sell newspapers and a few cheap candies in, while me and the girls lived in the back room. That was before you was born. Now look what he's got—a grand big corner store, with plate-glass windows and him carrying a fancy line of canned goods and for-

eign fruits, while we're living like princes in the flat upstairs.

GEORGE. He can be proud; it ain't that, but he's mean, Ma. He won't let me work at my machines and things out in the shed no longer. Says I don't do the deliverin' decent when I've got them on my mind.

MRS. D. He didn't have no time when he was a boy, I guess. He's been a hard worker, your Pa has. He's been saving his money till now he's got a good pile laid by, and one of these days he's going to open a branch store on Cherry Street. Won't that be flossy, now?

GEORGE. (*In horror*) A branch store? Gosh! That means more work for me!

MRS. D. (*Resignedly*) It *will* mean a sight of work!

VOICE. (*From the store side*) Ma! Oh, Ma!

MRS. D. Yes, I'm coming.

(*Enter the DICKY girls through the swing doors.*)

MARY. Pa's closing up out there. He wants you to check up the register and slips.

MRS. D. Yes, I'm coming, I'm coming. You get a move on, George. I want to see you get started. Your Pa'll be scolding me for keeping you.

GEORGE. (*Picking up a big delivery basket*) Well, I'm going, ain't I?

(*Exit GEORGE, slamming door behind him.*)

MRS. D. (*Feeling round*) Now where are my glasses?

MARY. Feel in your skirt pocket, Ma.

MRS. D. Sure enough. You girls keep that fire up. (*Exit MRS. DICKY.*)

(The DICKY girls have plumped themselves down on chairs near the stove. They are rather pretty girls with nice complexions, but to-night they are pale, tired and drawn-looking. MARY, the older one, around twenty-three or four, is losing her good looks fast. GRACE, the younger one, is around nineteen. Her light brown hair and snappy black eyes make her most attractive. Their clothes are mussed and show hard wear and tear. One wears a worn, dark-blue sweater, the other a gray one. They have leather cuff protectors at their wrists. They sit on their chairs relaxed and rather crumpled up, suggesting complete exhaustion. After a few minutes' silence, MARY straightens up and stretches.)

MARY. Tired?

GRACE. Awful tired.

MARY. Honestly, I didn't think I could wait on another soul.

GRACE. Ain't Saturday nights something fierce?

MARY. *(With a groan)* You bet!

GRACE. Why can't Pa get someone extra in to help?

MARY. Costs too much, silly!

GRACE. He's making money hand over fist. I'm sick and tired of this talk about Pa not being able to afford things!

MARY. You know what he's saving up for?

GRACE. *(Brightening up)* What? Has he told you? A new house?

MARY. *(Bitterly)* A new house, your grandmother! I overheard him talking to Ma. He's getting ready to open up a branch store near that swell new residence district.

GRACE. A branch store? Good Lord!

MARY. That's what I say.

GRACE. As if one store wasn't enough. It's being the death of us as it is.

MARY. That's it. (*Repeats monotonously*) Being the death of us, being the death of us, being—

GRACE. (*Who has been poking the fire savagely, slams the door with a bang*) Aw, shut up!

MARY. Don't know as I shall. What have you got to say about it? You've got Harry. You're getting out of the store.

GRACE. (*Smiling all over*) Yes, I've got Harry.

MARY. When you going to tell Ma and Pa about Harry? Can't keep a secret forever.

GRACE. (*Shyly*) Harry's coming to-night. We're going to tell them then. Pa's always in a good humor Saturdays when trade's been big.

MARY. (*Dully*) And when you're married, you won't be livin' home with us.

GRACE. (*Leaning forward, her eyes snapping with excitement*) You bet not! I saw the cutest little flat last night, Mary, up on Center Street above a blacksmith shop, and we're going to have that. And every morning I'll be going to market. Other folks can wait on me for a while! I'll not be doing the weighing out and tying up and making change!

MARY. (*Maliciously*) You'll be feeling pretty swell, won't you?

GRACE. And then Saturday nights Harry will be coming home with a pay envelope and him and me will be going out to a show.

MARY. Gee, on a Saturday night!

GRACE. I won't be running my legs off in that old store. I'll have Harry and my nice little flat and the shows to go to.

MARY. (*Rousing herself*) And what'll I be doing while you're having such a grand time?

GRACE. You? Oh! Why, I guess—you'll be still in the store.

MARY. Yes, that's just where I'll be. Working

twice as hard and long because you're gone. With millions of Saturday nights ahead of me.

GRACE. Mary, why don't you get out of it same as I'm doing?

MARY. How can I get out of it? Haven't got a beau like you have.

GRACE. You might get one. Couldn't get as fine a one as Harry. He's a terrible fine man, Mary.

MARY. How old do you think I am, anyway? When a girl gets to be twenty-four and ain't ever been asked to get married, she ain't to get no further chance, as I see.

GRACE. You might work out, in someone else's store.

MARY. There's Ma. She's working the skin off her fingers as it is. Where'd she be with both of us gone?

GRACE. (*Hotly*) Pa would simply have to hire someone in to help.

MARY. He wouldn't. Not anyways until Ma was about in her grave. It ain't only the money with Pa, though that's the main thing. It's his pride. He's real puffed up about having all his family working in the store for him.

GRACE. Well, I, for one, am getting out. You and George could, too, if you'd only show some fight.

MARY. Gee, I wish George could get out!

GRACE. Don't it seem a shame that Pa won't let him go on with his schooling?

MARY. He could be one of these engineers some day. Why, his teacher told Ma he was one of the smartest boys with his hands he'd ever seen. He's always messing around with wire and wheels and things making something. He ought to have a chance.

GRACE. Well, he ain't going to get it. Not if Pa knows it.

MARY. Pa's training him up to take his place.

Can't you see George in a few years out there in the store rubbing his hands together same as Pa does? (*Imitating the suave salesman*) "Nice day, Mrs. Thompson. Yes, eggs is high but they're going higher. Better buy now." That's what George's coming to. Lord, ain't it fierce?

GRACE. You've got to get out of it, Mary, you and George. What could Pa do if we put up a fight? There's the three of us against the one of him and Harry would fight with us.

MARY. I'd like to see you fight him. He's our Pa in the first place and he's always had his own way. You wait. Just you——

(*A knock is heard at the outer door.*)

GRACE. (*Excitedly*) That's him. That's Harry now! (*Sings out*) Come on in.

(*Enter HARRY. He is tall and thin, good-looking in a way. His hair suggests oiling and his cheeks much scrubbing. He wears a shiny, blue suit much too blue and a flashy necktie.*)

HARRY. Hello!

GRACE. (*Swinging around on her stool and facing the door*) Hello!

HARRY. (*As he comes into the room, slipping out of his overcoat and dumping it and his hat on a box*) Hello, Mary.

MARY. Hello, Harry!

HARRY. (*Leaning down and smacking GRACE on the cheek*) How's the kid?

GRACE. (*With a little giggle*) Aw, Harry, come on! (*She pulls him around and down beside her.*)

HARRY. Come on, yourself. What do you want? Another? (*Starts to kiss her again.*)

GRACE. (*Ducking coyly*) What're you doin'? With Mary here and everything!

MARY. (*Who has been staring fixedly at the little shining glows of light coming through the slates in the stove door*) Go right ahead. I'm minding my own business.

HARRY. See, old girl. She ain't paying no attention. Come on, kiss me.

GRACE. Aw, go on. (*Kissing him.*)

(*HARRY puts one arm clumsily around her. GRACE leans up against him.*)

MARY. You want me to get out?

GRACE. Ain't no use. Just as soon as Pa and Ma come in we're going to tell them about our wanting to get married. Ain't we, Harry?

HARRY. Sure thing! Right away. Say, what do you think happened to me to-day?

GRACE. Have you got a raise, Harry? Have you?

HARRY. Ain't you the smart one, though? Yap, that's it. Got a raise and a change of job. I'm one of the De Lux Manufacturing Company's city agents now!

GRACE. City agent! Don't that sound swell? What do you have to do?

HARRY. Oh, I go out from the office every morning to all the drug stores in town and get the orders for the De Lux brand soap and tooth paste and things.

MARY. Pretty good job, Harry, ain't it? You haven't been with the De Lux people for very long.

HARRY. Nope, and I tell you I felt pretty big when the boss called me in and told me I was a first-rate hand for business.

GRACE. Should think you might have. Gee, I'm proud of you.

HARRY. I ain't got so very much of a salary yet, but I guess by going slow, we can scratch along.

GRACE. You bet we can.

HARRY. We can get a couple of rooms to live somewhere, and we'll be together.

GRACE. Oh, Harry, I can hardly wait.

HARRY. It sure is going to be nice. I'll be coming home at night with my lists and things and after we've had supper, you'll help me with them, checking them off and getting things straight.

GRACE. Will you have to bring work home nights, Harry?

MARY. What you want to make Grace work for? She's done her share and more, too, right here in this store.

HARRY. I don't want to make her work. I thought that she being such a good hand at things like that would be a help, that's all.

GRACE. (*With a tiny sigh*) Sure, I'll help you, Harry. I want to help you.

MARY. She don't want to do any such thing, Harry, and don't you make her.

HARRY. I ain't going to make her, am I? (*Anxious to change the subject*) Say, you know I think your Pa's on to the fact that we want to get married.

GRACE. What makes you think that?

HARRY. To-day when my boss was telling me about my new job, he asks me if I knew Mr. Dicky. Your Pa had been inquiring of him what kind of a feller I was, hard worker, good business head and the like. The boss gives me the wink and says he gave me a good send-off.

GRACE. What do you suppose Pa was up to?

HARRY. Kinda finding out about his future son-in-law, don't you think?

GRACE. Well, I never!

HARRY. Thought you said we was going to have a lot of trouble with your Pa?

GRACE. Don't look that way. Not if your boss said you was a promising young man.

MARY. I wouldn't be too sure. You never can tell what Pa's going to do.

GRACE. Shush. Here they come now!

(Enter MRS. DICKY from the store, holding the door open and talking back to MR. DICKY.)

MRS. D. That's done at last. Thought we never was going to get them slips and money checked up. Why, here's Harry!

(Enter MR. DICKY.)

MR. D. Sure enough! Hello, Harry!

(MR. DICKY is a large man with a round, red face, white hair and whiskers. He wears a derby hat well down on his head and you simply cannot imagine him with that hat off. A pair of gold-rimmed spectacles adorns his nose. A large, not too white butcher's apron covers his worn gray suit. He carries a money bag and strong box which he deposits on the desk. He seems entirely satisfied with himself and life in general.)

HARRY. Evening, Mr. Dicky.

MR. D. *(Rubbing his hands and taking a stool near the stove)* Takes us quite a time to get fixed up out there in the store after Saturday's trade. Fine day, wasn't it, girls?

MARY and GRACE. Sure, Pa.

MR. D. Got all that fruit sold off I knew would spoil if it had to stand over Sunday, and I'd been out a nice sum of money.

MRS. D. *(Anxiously)* George back yet?

MARY. Haven't seen him.

MR. D. That boy's slower than molasses in January. He's got to learn to step around a little livelier.

(GRACE has been poking and nudging at HARRY, who is now standing up, very much embarrassed.)

HARRY. Mr. Dicky.

MR. D. Well?

HARRY. Mr. Dicky——

GRACE. Pa——

MR. D. Come on. Speak out.

HARRY. (*With a gulp*) Grace and me want to get married.

(*There is a dead silence for a second.*)

MRS. D. (*With a little half sob*) Not Grace, Harry, not Grace. She is only a baby.

MR. D. Shush! Ma! Grace is old enough, Lord knows. (*He looks fixedly at HARRY*) So the two of you want to get married?

HARRY. Yes, sir.

GRACE. Yes, Pa, we do.

MR. D. Let's see, now. What's your trade, young man?

HARRY. I work for the De Lux Manufacturing firm.

MR. D. De Lux. Oh, yes. De Lux. (*As if thinking.*)

HARRY. (*Timidly*) I got a raise to-day, sir.

GRACE. He's city agent now, Pa.

HARRY. The boss says I'm right in line for better jobs. I'm a good one, he thinks.

MRS. D. Harry's a good boy, Pa, a real good boy.

MR. D. (*As if continuing along one line of thought, more to himself than aloud*) So Grace and

him want to be married. (*Pause*) Eyer worked in a grocery store, young man?

MARY. (*With a gasp, feeling what is coming*) Pa!

HARRY. Use to help my dad in his when I was a kid.

MR. D. You've got a good business head and seem to be a hard worker. (*Pause*) Think I'll give Harry and Grace the branch store to run, Ma!

MRS. D. (*As if she must say something*) Sakes, what an idea!

MARY. (*Horrorstruck*) Pa! Oh, Pa!

GRACE. (*Who for a second cannot believe her ears, with a little hysterical shriek*) Oh, Pa! Harry! You mustn't! Oh, you mustn't. (*Stands clinging to HARRY, sobbing.*)

MR. D. Well, I'm blamed if I see anything to make a fuss about. Here I am offering this young man a good money-making proposition, and Grace is carrying on as if I was sending him to jail.

GRACE. (*Through her sobs*) Don't you see? It's the store, I was going to get out of it. Don't you see?

MR. D. Can't say as I do. But you listen here to my plans. When I seen that Harry was hanging around here most of the time, I goes to his boss and finds out that he's a real quick stepper and an all round business man. Then it pops into my head that he's just the sort I want to run the branch store. The two of you would make it go from the start.

MARY. Sounds like you, Pa.

MR. D. (*Not heeding*) This feller ain't getting enough salary now to keep you decent. I'm giving the two of you a chance to get somewhere.

GRACE. (*Against HARRY'S shoulder*) Don't want a chance.

MRS. D. Ain't you ashamed, Grace, taking on this way and your Pa trying to do what's right?

THE STORE

GRACE. I ain't ashamed, I tell you, I ain't.

MR. D. I'll put up the capital, Harry, and do the stocking up and you and me will share the profits.

HARRY. But you see, Mr. Dicky, Grace——

MR. D. And they're going to be big profits, too. That store's in one of them districts of swells where you can shoot up the price and not get a murmur.

GRACE. Oh, Harry, don't! Don't do it!

HARRY. It sure looks like a good thing. Now if Grace——

MR. D. You'll be making money from the very start. You know enough about things to begin on and Grace knows the business from A to Z.

GRACE. Harry, don't take it. Say you won't!

HARRY. But, Grace, you'll be wanting nice things and lots of money. Here's our chance.

GRACE. No, I won't. I want to get out of the store, that's all.

HARRY. (*Clumsily patting her*) Just to get a start, little girl, just to get a start. But it's big money, right away, and you and me will be working together.

MRS. D. See now, Grace, Harry wants to do the right thing by you.

(*GEORGE has entered from the street door and joins the group around the stove.*)

GEORGE. Gosh, what's up? (*No attention is paid to him.*)

MR. D. I've been looking for a capable young man like you, Harry.

GRACE. I've been all my life in the store and I was thinking I was gettin' out.

HARRY. It won't be all our lives. Don't you see? Just to get a start. Think of the money we'll be makin'. There's heaps of money in grocery stores. It's slow work with them De Lux people. Why, I

know fellows who've been working for them years and they ain't getting no more than eighty dollars a month.

MR. D. Eighty dollars don't go very far these days.

HARRY. And the store'll be paying right away. We can have a nice little flat and a Ford and go out into the country, Sundays. We'll be real swells, you wait and see.

GRACE. A Ford would be nice.

HARRY. Yes, and a——

MR. D. Quit your coaxing, Harry. You leave Grace to me. Now, see here, Grace Dicky, we've had enough fooling. Do you want to marry Harry? Do you love him?

GRACE. Yes—yes, I do.

MR. D. All right! You either take Harry as manager of the branch Dicky Grocery Store or you leave him. Do you understand?

GRACE. Yes, I suppose——

MR. D. All right, then, do you take Harry, such being the case, or leave him?

GRACE. (*Choking down her sobs*) I—take him. Harry! Oh, Harry! (*Buries her face in his shoulder.*)

HARRY. The store won't be so bad, kid, you wait and——

GRACE. It's the same old store, that's all.

MARY. (*In an undertone to GRACE*) You've had your chance to fight. Look what you've done.

GRACE. It's Harry, Mary. I can't leave Harry. He's mine. I can't leave him.

MARY. Oh, well——

MR. D. I don't see what you've got against the store anyways.

MARY. You wouldn't see, Pa. You wouldn't, because the store's everything to you and nothing to Grace and George and me.

MRS. D. Mary, what talk!

MARY. Wait a shake, Ma, till I'm through. We kids have worked here all our lives, worked hard.

MR. D. I suppose you're going to say I never gave you no schooling.

MARY. Well, we never went to school one day longer than we had to. And look at George here. He isn't getting half a chance.

MR. D. He's getting all he needs, ain't he?

MARY. He's not, and you know it. His teacher says he could be a terrible smart mechanic or something like that if he had the training.

MRS. D. Yes, Pa, George ought to get more learning. He'll be first rate, like teacher says.

MR. D. (*In disgust*) A mechanic. Who wants to be a mechanic anyways? That ain't nothing.

GEORGE. Gee, Pa, it's fun making things and seeing them work.

MR. D. (*Indulgently*) I guess, George, you'll find the grocery store good enough for you. It's been good enough for me always.

MARY. That's it. It's been store, store, store, from morning till night. You never talk about nothing else, Pa!

MR. D. Well, what of it?

MARY. You've been making money, lots of money, and it's been no use to us because we had to go right on working like pack horses.

MR. D. Don't we own our own pew at church? Don't you girls have good silk dresses to wear to church? Don't we come in Sundays and have a first-class dinner cooked by your Ma? And what about Sunday afternoons, don't you have them free?

MARY. We're too dog tired to care when Sunday comes.

GRACE. And what do we do Sunday nights, Pa Dicky, what do we do then?

MR. D. Why, we work in the store. Got to get the place fit for Monday morning, haven't we?

MRS. D. (*Trying to smooth things along*) Someone's got to do the work.

MARY. We don't need to work ourselves into the grave, Ma, while Pa piles up the money.

GRACE. He could hire someone in to help, you know he could.

MARY. Do you see now, Pa, why Grace hates the store? Why we all hate it? Why we all want to get out? It's been working us to death all our lives and we haven't had one *blame* thing in return.

MRS. D. (*Timidly*) They have worked pretty hard, Pa, all of them.

MR. D. Worked hard? Lord, Ma, they don't know what hard work means. Think how we worked to get this store started. We've gone hungry, Ma. Didn't have enough to eat sometimes, so we could buy some more stock for the store. We've been the hard workers, you and me, not them.

MRS. D. We didn't have the money then, we have now. Does sort'a seem that things should be casier for the children.

MR. D. Easy, Ma? Why, it *is* easy. They're not working themselves to death as I can see.

MRS. D. Couldn't you have paid help so they'd have more free time to enjoy themselves in? They're young, Pa. They're still children.

MR. D. (*Scornfully*) Do you think there'd be any money if I paid it all out in wages?

MARY. There ought to be *some*. But you haven't paid it out and you ain't going to. You're using it to start a branch store—more work! (*Between her teeth*) Oh, I hope it fails! I hope it fails!

MR. D. (*Aroused*) See here, Mary, I've had enough of this. The money's mine, ain't it, to do with as I please?

GEORGE. (*Under his breath*) I'd like to know who made it for you?

MRS. D. George, you shouldn't say such things.

MR. D. (*Turning on GEORGE*) What did you say?

GEORGE. Nothin'.

MR. D. George, you answer me. What did you say?

GEORGE. Nothin', Pa. Nothin'.

MR. D. Tell me what you said, George Dicky!

GEORGE. (*Sulkily*) Well—I said I thought we'd made the money for you.

MR. D. (*With great scorn*) Oh, you do, do you? A great slow poke like you, making my money! Suppose you kids don't think I saved and worked and pinched to get this store started in the first place. You'd be begging in the street this minute, every one of you, if it weren't for this store and my money. Why, I pay out every cent you earn for me, feeding you and clothing you and buying your books for school and keeping a roof over our head. I ask you now: "Is it my money?"

MARY. Good Lord, yes. It's your money, but you haven't come by it right.

MR. D. Mary Dicky, do you know what you're saying?

MARY. Yes, and I mean it, what's more. You haven't come by your money right.

MR. D. I'm as honest a man in trade as there is in this town. You ask anyone.

MARY. Sure, you're honest enough with your customers and your creditors, but you ain't honest with your children.

HARRY. Whew! Mary——

MARY. (*With a snap*) You mind your own business, Harry.

GEORGE. We do make Pa's money for him, don't we, Mary?

MARY. That's what I'm trying to tell him. George has it just right. We make the money for you and you keep it from us and make us go on working for you. There's where you ain't honest.

MRS. D. Haven't you been a little too hard on them, Pa?

MR. D. Ma, you leave this to me.

MARY. If you were honest, Pa, you wouldn't be forcing Grace to go and slave in that branch store if she wants Harry. If you were honest you'd be letting George be a mechanic.

GEORGE. I don't want to work in no grocery store, Pa. Gosh, I hate them. I've got a right to be a mechanic if I want to.

MARY. If you were honest you wouldn't let me and Ma work ourselves into the grave in your old store.

MRS. D. (*Gathering strength from the children*)
We get dreadful tired.

MARY. Sure we get tired! So tired that it don't seem as if we could drag ourselves upstairs at night: so tired that we go to sleep with our clothes on.

MRS. D. Women folks shouldn't work as hard as that, Pa.

MARY. None of it need be if Pa'd only be straight with us.

MR. D. I'm damned if you shall say that!

MARY. It's the truth!

MR. D. I am straight with you. I am honest with you. I tell you, it costs—all you're worth to me in the store to keep you, to feed you and clothe you.

GEORGE. That ain't true! That ain't so!

MARY. Do you mean that, Pa Dicky?

MR. D. I mean that, young lady. (*Pause.*)

MARY. All right, then. I'm getting out.

MR. D. What do you mean?

MARY. (*Paying no heed*) Come on, George,

and you, Ma. Grace's got Harry, she can't leave *him*. But we can go. We can work somewhere else. When we've earned the money, it'll be ours to spend as we choose.

GEORGE. I'm with you, Mary.

MARY. What's the sense of working in this store when we're not getting one cent? If all I've done for Pa in this store ain't but barely enough to keep me then I'm going out and keep myself.

MR. D. What do you think *you* can earn?

MARY. You just said I was earning enough for you, to pay for my keep. I can get that in someone else's store and I wouldn't be surprised if there was a little more besides. Come on, Ma, let's go.

MRS. D. Leave your father, Mary?

MARY. Why not?

MRS. D. Mary, I can't.

MARY. Aw, come on. It'll bring him to his senses. He won't be able to get another soul on earth to work for him as we have done. He'll have to pay out his precious old money in wages. In *wages*, Ma, for the first time in his life!

MRS. D. It don't seem right, somehow.

MARY. It's as right as he is.

MR. D. (*Threateningly*) Mary, you be careful.

MRS. D. I've been married to your Pa for 'most thirty years.

MARY. What's that? It ain't been thirty years of joy, I'll bet. Ma, he's being the death of you, of all of us with his confounded old store. It's time we got out.

MRS. D. (*With a frightened sob*) I can't.

MARY. Don't, then. We're going. Come, George! (*She moves toward the door.*)

MR. D. You think you're awful smart, young lady, don't you?

GRACE. (*Scared*) You ain't going to-night, Mary?

MARY. Yes, I am. I'm getting rid of this store. I ain't going to stay near it no longer. I'm going to be free. (*She opens the door.*)

GRACE. But where will you be? It's late.

MARY. Oh, Uncle Alf'll take us in. To-morrow morning early we can start looking for jobs.

HARRY. Say, Mary, see here——

MARY. I don't want to hear nothing from you, Harry. You're a nice one, you are. Here's Grace thinking she was getting rid of the store and you taking her right back into it. You ought to be ashamed.

HARRY. But you've got to have money, Mary. You've got to live decent. I won't have Grace working with me long. Gee, we've got to have money enough to live on.

GRACE. Harry's right, Mary. Don't you see?

MARY. Live on the store money if you want to. I don't. Come on if you're coming, George. Here's your chance. (*She swings the door back and forth.*)

GEORGE. (*With a chuckle*) Say, ain't it a good one on Pa?

(*MRS. DICKY has been sitting staring straight in front of her.*)

MR. D. (*Absolutely conscious that he is playing his trump card*) What about your mother, Mary?

GRACE. You said, Mary, you said Ma'd be worked to a frazzle.

MARY. (*Turning*) Ma! Oh, Ma!

MR. D. (*Watching his effect*) Yes, what about your Ma? What's she to do with all you kids gone and Grace at the branch store? Who's going to help her with the work?

MRS. D. (*Shaking herself*) Don't stay for me, Mary, don't stay! I see it all now, just as plain. It's been my fault, all my fault. I was as crazy as

your Pa once about the money and the store. Mothers should see to their children and not let them be worked to death. Don't mind me. It's right for you to go. Open the door, Mary. Give George, anyways, his chance.

GEORGE. Ain't you coming, Mary?

MARY. (*Slowly*) We can't, George, we can't.

MRS. D. (*Crying into her apron*) Oh, Mary, ain't you going?

MARY. (*Shutting the door*) Don't cry, Ma. There ain't nothing to cry about.

MR. D. Of course they ain't going. Who ever heard of such foolishness? They've got a good home here. What do they want to leave it for?

GEORGE. (*Still at the door*) Aw, I say!

MR. D. The trouble with you kids is that you don't know what you're working for. My plan's this. I've been keeping it a secret. It ain't going to be one branch store but a chain of branch stores, with my name, George Dicky, over every door. That's what I'm saving for and what you're working for and I want it understood.

MARY. (*Wearily*) Oh, that's all right, Pa, that's all right.

(*The telephone rings sharply. MR. DICKY goes.*)

MR. D. Yes, Mrs. Evans—you haven't got your oranges? The boy's on the way now—he must have been delayed. He ought to be there any minute. Oh, yes—yes, you'll get them all right—good night.

(*MR. DICKY picks up a bag hastily and fills it with oranges from a box, handing it to GEORGE.*)

MR. D. Here, George, you take these oranges up to Mrs. Evans's and get a move on.

THE STORE

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(GEORGE takes oranges and exits like a streak. MRS. DICKY starts to pull down the shades and straighten up the desk. The girls and HARRY sit staring at the stove, HARRY patting GRACE occasionally on the back and holding her hand. MARY sits much bent over, with her head in her hand. MR. DICKY takes out his pipe and fills it.)

CURTAIN





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